



Learning for Life!

Headteacher: **Ms Annemari Ottridge** M.Ed. NPQH NPQEL

18th May 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

The last four days' discussion about reopening schools in England with effect from 1 June has left me more perplexed than ever. Never in my lifetime have School Governors and School Staff been left with more questions than answers having listened to the Government, Trade Unions and media contributions to this debate.

It seems that everyone has their own take on what is happening, what should be happening and why. It is confusing and people get worried when information and facts don't make sense. At the end of the day, this is about children and their learning. What kind of a message are we giving as adults to our children when we talk about going back to school?

Lonsdale School students can come to school only when the Governing Board and the School Leadership Team decide it is safe to do so. This will be determined by the level of risk to children, staff and families. This decision will be based on the Government, Hertfordshire Local Authority and NHS medical advice. We have just today received the HCC guidance for Special Schools, which gives us a framework with the county's expectations and timescales.

Lonsdale Governing Board and the Senior Leadership Team work seamlessly together to use this new guidance to create a robust 'Return to School' - plan together with a number of risk assessments, which will ensure that children, parents and staff can have confidence they are returning to an environment that is safe.

The Trade Unions for teachers, support staff and school leaders are instructing their members to be clear that their involvement in any formal discussions is on the basis of sharing information only and not their agreement to an unsafe reopening of any school from 1 June. The dispute between the Government and the Trade Unions is ongoing. Until this difference of opinion is resolved, Lonsdale School can only provide education for Key Workers children and those who have been identified as vulnerable by Social Care and the School Pastoral/Safeguarding team.

In order for Special Schools to increase the student number in June, the Government guidance for Special Schools states '*Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools will work towards a phased return of more children and young people without a focus on specific year groups*'.

This means that Lonsdale will introduce a maximum of 5 small groups of children back to school and these groups will be of mixed ages. Students in Nursery, Year 11 or Year 13 will not be returning back to school during the first phase.

'It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group stays away from other people and groups' (DfE, May 2020).

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At the moment we are doing the following:

- Refreshing our Risk Assessments and other health and safety advice for children, young people and staff in light of recent Government advice, and identifying protective measures. We are also ensuring that all health and safety compliance checks have been undertaken before opening.
- Organising small class groups, maximum of 5 students
- Organising classrooms and other learning environments to maintain space between seats and desks
- Refreshing the timetable
- Staggering drop-off and collection times
- Planning parents' drop-off and pick-up protocols that minimise adult to adult contact
- Considering how to keep small groups of children together throughout the day and to avoid larger groups of children mixing
- Removing unnecessary items from classrooms and other learning environments where there is space to store it elsewhere
- Considering how children and young people will arrive at school, and by whom and how they will be transported
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For the next two weeks we will be working together with the HCC, Social Care, NHS teams and ENGIE, our Facilities Management team, to prepare the school for the first intake of students.

It is important for us to know if you are considering sending your child to school during the Summer Term. The order in which the students are offered to return to school is based on an individual Risk Assessment for each child. We will offer the first phase return for students who:

- can physically and emotionally cope with the adapted school environment and structure
- can understand the rules of social distancing
- can cope with working with a mixed social group other than their class group
- can be independent in their school work
- have no underlying medical conditions requiring 1:1 clinical support from the school's clinical care or the NHS nursing team

We will directly contact those families whose children have been identified for the first phase. Anne Smart and I will contact you shortly to discuss this with you in person.

We are aware that some children and staff continue to shield until the end of June having received their NHS letters. The most recent guidance update, 5 May, from Public Health England has more information about what this means to your child and it is recommended that you liaise directly with your GP or specialists to understand how these changes affect your child.

We are committed to continue our home learning support until the end of this academic year. Your child's teacher will communicate with you as before and daily plans will be provided for all year groups.

In the next few days we will share our communication plan together with the revised Lonsdale Home/School agreement, which outlines how we can work successfully under these new conditions to keep everyone safe.

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Thank you for your support and please be reassured that we are doing everything we can to bring your child back to school as soon it is safe to do so.

Warmest regards



Annemari Ottridge
Headteacher

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